



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR 07/12/2017



Montgomery County votes to foreclose on Beech-Nut site

Agreement with federal agency clears way

Daniel Fitzsimmons | July 11, 2017



The former Beech-Nut plant in Canajoharie in December 2013.

PHOTOGRAPHER: DAILY GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

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The Montgomery County Legislature voted Tuesday night to foreclose on the Beech-Nut site in Canajoharie after the county was released from environmental liens on the property held by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"It's been a long process to get to this benchmark,

ly Dimond after the vote.

-- mostly asbestos-related -- at the site. The agreement further stipulates that if the county were to eventually sell the site, that 50 percent of the purchase price would go to the federal agency.

Dimond said the agreement covers any future costs the EPA would incur for asbestos cleanup at the site, and hold the county harmless for the cost of such a cleanup.

The EPA has already spent money to clean up asbestos piles left behind by the former owner, Connecticut-based TD Development LLC.

Ossenfort said being released from the liens -- two totaling \$4 million -- was crucial in the county taking steps to foreclose on the property.

"Without resolving the lien issue a foreclosure certainly could have exposed us to some liability," said Ossenfort. "This entire package is one that's good for the county and I think fair for both sides."

The county has already secured nearly \$1 million in grants and other funding to rehabilitate the eastern portion of the property, which comprises a little more than half of the 26-acre site.

Ossenfort said the county will be lining up a contractor to remove asbestos piles from the property while the 30-day foreclosure process is completed. He added that county officials hope the work, which also includes demolishing buildings, will start at the site in the fall using the grant money.



The county has secured \$500,000 in a state Restore New York grant for the asbestos and demolition work. In addition, the county's Industrial Development Agency applied for a grant from National Grid's Brownfield Redevelopment Program and was awarded \$300,000 by the company. The program provides grants to fund utility-related infrastructure improvement projects and other costs necessary to aid in the redevelopment of a brownfield site, a federal designation which the Beech-Nut site falls under.

The eastern portion of the property is regarded as a priority by county officials due to the existence of water and sewer hookups, as well as the absence of historical structures that are present on the western half of the site.

The EPA recently ordered Beech-Nut, which primarily manufactures baby food, to pay for the asbestos cleanup at the site, but the company refused. The agency claims the company commissioned a 2012 survey -- one year before the sale of the property to TD Development -- that estimated asbestos abatement work would cost \$1.7 million to clean just the eastern half of the site.

It's unclear if the EPA will take action against Beech-Nut for defying their order to clean the site up. An agency spokesman said EPA will not be commenting on their posture toward Beech-Nut because it is an ongoing enforcement matter.

As for TD Development, which bought the property from Beech-Nut in 2013, Montgomery County officials maintain that the company owes more than \$1.7 million in back taxes. TD Development owner Todd Clifford has not responded to inquiries from the county in over a year, and Ossenfort said he doesn't expect Clifford to fight the foreclosure.

"I don't expect to hear from any of the former owners," said Ossenfort.

Whether and how the county or another entity will pursue Clifford for repayment of back taxes and for his allegedly stripping the site of valuable metals and abandoning it is unclear. Ossenfort said his office is aware that Clifford bears some responsibility for the site and will be looking further into the matter.

The county hopes to eventually turn the eastern portion of the site into a business or industrial park and use it to attract corporate tenants or a developer interested in building something on the property.

Ossenfort said the process to rehabilitate the site will be a long one, but that it's a county priority as far as he's concerned.

"This is about making steady progress over a number of years, that's the game plan," said Ossenfort, who estimated that rehabilitating and marketing the site will be a five- to seven-year process. "It's really going to depend on how successful we are in bringing in resources and the private sector."

Village of Canajoharie Mayor Francis Avery, who a

s a big step forward for the site and the residents of Canajoharie.

only to tear some of it down ... and begin again.

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How beauty pageant led to a Trump son's encounter with Russian lawyer

Miss Universe has been subject of particular intrigue for months

MEGAN TWOHEY And STEVE EDER/The New York Times | [July 10, 2017](#)





Donald Trump Jr. arrives on Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on April 16, 2017.

PHOTOGRAPHER: AL DRAGO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

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During summer 2013, Donald Trump mused about whether President Vladimir Putin of Russia would meet him at the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow that fall. "If so, will he become my new best friend?" Trump posted on Twitter.

Putin did not make it, but the beauty competition in Moscow brought the Trump family into partnership with Emin Agalarov, a pop star in Russia, and his father, Aras — a duo that develops major real estate projects in Russia and appears friendly with the Kremlin.

Since then, Emin Agalarov has repeatedly boasted of maintaining a warm relationship with Trump. And a publicist for the younger Agalarov said Monday that it was his client who requested that Donald Trump Jr. speak with a Kremlin-connected lawyer during the presidential campaign, a meeting [first reported by The New York Times](#).

Trump Jr. — who followed through with that meeting last June, along with Trump's campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, and son-in-law, Jared Kushner — said the lawyer promised information damaging to Hillary Clinton but failed to deliver, and quickly switched to a contentious issue involving U.S.-Russia relations.

The publicist, Rob Goldstone, a former British tabloid journalist and the president of a marketing company called Ovi 2 Entertainment, has worked with Emin Agalarov, and was involved with the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow. Goldstone said he helped to arrange and attended the June 9, 2016, meeting at Trump Tower with the lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya.

The Agalarovs, who did not respond to an email seeking comment, are originally from Azerbaijan, but now run the Crocus Group, a large real estate development company in Russia. Shortly before the Miss Universe pageant in November 2013, Putin presented Aras Agalarov with the Order of Honor, one of Russia's highest civilian awards. Several years earlier, the Crocus Group was selected to build the Far Eastern Federal University near Vladivostok.

Trump, an owner of the Miss Universe pageant at the time, chose the Agalarovs to host the beauty competition in 2013, and discussed collaborating with them on a tower in Moscow. He also appeared in one of Emin Agalarov's music videos, which featured pageant contestants.

The pageant took place at a Crocus Group complex, and it put Trump in contact with influential people in Russia, as he explained in a September 2015 interview on "The Hugh Hewitt Show."

"I called it my weekend in Moscow," said Trump, who had announced his candidacy for president a few months earlier. He added: "I was with the top-level people, both oligarchs and generals, and top-of-the-government people. I can't go further than that, but I will tell you that I met the top people, and the relationship was extraordinary."

Aras Agalarov told The Washington Post last year that Putin was planning to meet with Trump during his visit to Moscow, but had to cancel at the last minute because of a scheduling conflict. Instead, he said, the Agalarovs passed along a friendly note from Putin and a traditional Russian box as a gift.

Emin Agalarov, who is known for being accompanied by beautiful women, and was once married to the daughter of the president of Azerbaijan, has said his relationship with Trump began when he requested that Olivia Culpo, the 2012 Miss Universe, star in a music video he was making for a song called "Amor."

In January 2013, the Agalarovs traveled to Las Vegas and the Agalarovs would host the Miss Universe competition.

and at the end of the competition, Trump announced that

While in Russia, some of the contestants were required to film scenes for the "Amor" video, among them Erin Brady, that year's Miss USA winner. During an interview earlier this year, Brady said that the women were not paid for the work and that it was seen as a requirement.

The pop star made an impression.

"If you think of a traditional Russian person, they're like serious," Brady said. "He was laughing and much more outgoing. He made everyone feel very welcome."

She added: "He was excited that all of these women from all over the world were part of his production."

During his time in Moscow, Trump also found time to film a scene for the video.

There also was discussion of development deals — and introductions to other well-connected Russians.

During the visit, the Agalarovs and Herman Gref — a former Russian economy minister who serves as the chief executive of the state-controlled Sberbank PJSC — hosted a dinner for Trump on the night of the pageant, according to Bloomberg News.

Phil Ruffin, Trump's partner at the Trump International Hotel and Tower in Las Vegas, who flew to Moscow for the competition, said he and Trump had lunch with the Agalarovs at the Ritz-Carlton.

Hope for a deal with the Agalarovs came after many failed attempts by the Trumps to break into the real estate market in Russia dating to the late 1980s.

Trump Jr., speaking at a Manhattan real estate conference in 2008, told the audience he had been to Russia a half-dozen times over an 18-month period. "I really prefer Moscow over all cities in the world," he said, according to eTurboNews. But he acknowledged that the Russian market was challenging, with "an issue of 'Will I ever see my money back out of that deal or can I actually trust the person I am doing the deal with?'"

But after the Miss Universe weekend, his father sounded optimistic and grateful to the Agalarovs.

"I had a great weekend with you and your family," Trump wrote on Twitter. "You have done a FANTASTIC job. TRUMP TOWER-MOSCOW is next. EMIN was WOW!"

Emin Agalarov told Forbes in March that plans for the joint project came to an end when Trump ran for office, but that the president has maintained contact with the family. He added that Trump sent the Agalarovs a handwritten note after his election win.

"Now that he ran and was elected, he does not forget his friends," he told the magazine.

Emin Agalarov also said he exchanged messages with Trump Jr. as recently as January.

After Trump's victory in November, Emin Agalarov posted a photo of himself, his father, and Trump on Instagram with the message, "The sky is the limit! Congratulations Mr. President."

The Miss Universe pageant has been the subject of particular intrigue for months, given the federal investigation into the Kremlin's meddling in the presidential election, and the question of whether the Trump campaign colluded with Russian officials — a claim that the president and his associates have denied.

Trump Jr. said in a statement Sunday that Veselnitskaya, the Russian lawyer, did not provide any information of value about Clinton, his father's opponent in last year's election, during the June 2016 meeting. He said the conversation soon turned to the adoption of Russian children, and a U.S. law called the Magnitsky Act, which blacklists those suspected of human rights abuses in Russia.

"Obviously I'm the first person on a campaign to ever take a meeting to hear info about an opponent... went nowhere but had to listen," he said Monday on Twitter.

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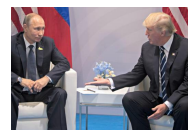
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Foss: Cuomo 2020 is bad idea that won't die

The left would prefer just about anyone to him

Sara Foss | July 10, 2017



Gov. Andrew Cuomo addresses a transit conference in Manhattan on June 29, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHER: VICTOR J. BLUE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Some bad ideas just never seem to die.

For instance: Andrew Cuomo 2020.

With the exception of the governor's inner circle and certain pockets of the Beltway media, there is basically no one on earth who believes Cuomo should be the Democratic nominee for president.

This simple fact didn't stop Politico Magazine from respecting.

The article suggests that Cuomo can beat Trump .

If there's one group that's completely resistant to the idea of a Cuomo candidacy, it's the left. The left would prefer just about anyone to Cuomo, and aren't shy about saying so.

One of the key lessons of last year's Democratic primary and presidential election is that the party base is moving away from Clinton-era politics and policies, and is ready to embrace a more aggressive progressive platform.

No matter what he does, Cuomo can't quite shake the perception that he's a Wall Street-friendly centrist who cares more about keeping developers and special interests happy than advancing truly progressive policies.

Even his most ostensibly progressive achievements have come in for criticism from activists, usually for promising more than they actually deliver.

Take the governor's much-ballyhooed free college tuition program.

Even people who support free tuition have found fault with the state's new program, arguing that it doesn't go far enough and won't help the students with the greatest need.

Of course, Cuomo's problems go beyond the left.

There's his personality - arguably his biggest liability.

The governor is an astute politician and his deal-making ability is impressive.

But he's not especially likable, and he's never struck me as particularly adept at retail politics.

Is he really going to resonate with voters in early primary states such as New Hampshire and South Carolina? He has a hard enough time connecting with people in upstate New York.

There's also the not-insignificant matter of Cuomo's baggage, which the Politico article doesn't even mention.

One of his signature economic development projects, the Buffalo Billion, is under federal investigation, and two former aides and friends, Joe Percoco and Todd Howe, were charged in connection with the wide-ranging public corruption case. Howe has since pleaded guilty and is cooperating with investigators.

Cuomo has also presided over one of the most dysfunctional state legislatures in the country. His list of accomplishments doesn't include meaningful ethics reform, and there's little evidence he's interested in pushing for true reform at the state level. In fact, there's more evidence he's obstructed reform, by prematurely shutting down the Moreland Commission - established to investigate corruption in state government - back in 2014.

Voters in other states might not care about the finer details of the Buffalo Billion case or the ethical lapses of the New York State Legislature, but this doesn't mean they'll be willing to overlook the cloud of scandal hanging over the governor's head.

Skilled political operatives have all the material they need to create the impression that Cuomo is corrupt, and I expect they'll take full advantage of it, if given the opportunity.

I do expect Cuomo to run for president, because his actions and behavior are those of a man preparing for the national stage.

But this doesn't mean he belongs on the national stage.

Nobody I know is excited about Cuomo 2020, but it takes more than a lack of enthusiasm to kill off bad ideas.

We'll be hearing more about Cuomo running for president, whether we want to or not.

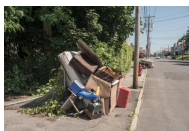
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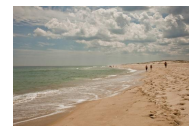
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